

May / June 2009

Peace Matters

There Is No
Peace Without
Justice

SOLIDARITY WORK IN NORTH OMAHA By Stuart Williams, NFP Member

In order to be effective, we must work on all levels—international, national and local. Locally, Omahans should consider prioritizing the people of North Omaha. Personally, I consider it a moral obligation, given that Omaha has the highest rate of poverty in the nation among African-American children!

After researching various efforts targeting this inexcusable state, I came away hopeful. There are many committed, serious, energetic people already involved. May I suggest you get to know them and find a way to help?

African-American Empowerment Network: this is an amalgam of many organizations. It has several very thoughtful "covenants" and a solid leader in Willie Barney. For volunteer opportunities, call 502-5153 or visit www.empoweromaha.com.

Building Bright Futures: another multi-layered organization...and with money! It also is starting slowly and deliberately; after all, this is a long-term issue! After extensive research, six key areas were identified. Its website is www.buildingbrightfutures.net. The phone number is 715-4145.

100 Black Men of Omaha: director, Kenny McMorris and approximately 60 activists are involved in four initiatives, including group mentoring and an academy for 3rd-6th graders. Mentors are asked for a one-year commitment of two hours per week. Visit the website at www.100blackmenomaha.org, or call 934-7065.

Boys and Girls Club: volunteers are needed

as mentors and tutors, according to director Dave Felici. Go to 2610 Hamilton Street to fill out an application, or visit the website at www.bgcomaha.org.

All Our Kids: Susan Lamprecht, volunteer coordinator, says she also needs volunteers for tutoring and mentoring. Mentoring usually occurs in groups with a ratio of four to one. Website: www.allourkids.org. Phone: 930-3000.

Middle School Learning Center Initiative: this partnership provides after-school programs. Contact NFP member Cary Tobin at 932-2025, or visit www.mslci.org.

Urban League: the league needs mentors for its after-school and summer programs. Contact Courtney Carter at 453-9730. Website: www.urbanleagueneb.org.

Hope Center for Kids: located at 2209 North 20th Street, the center has a detailed volunteer application form at www.hopecenterforkids.com, or you can call 341-HOPE.



ANOTHER WAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There are many ways you can help to make a difference in our community, state and the world. One way is to be a dues-paying member of Nebraskans for Peace or by making a special donation to NFP. In this difficult economic time for NFP please consider sending a generous check to Nebraskans for Peace, 941 'O' Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the Nebraska Peace Foundation at the same address.

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PEG GALLAGHER - THE HOLY OUTLAW

By Kate Hughes, NFP Member

Peg Sheehan Fitzgerald Gallagher received the UNO School of Social Work Gandhi Peace Award on April 3, 2009. It was a thrill for all those who joined in the celebration to honor Peg's spirit, love, and integrity.



NFP's Peterson, Gallagher and Fellion

I would like to share with you some of the comments made by fellow peace activists who nominated Peg for this much-deserved award.

Peg's spirit is like that which inspired Mohandas Gandhi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, Junior. To honor Peg is to honor that spirit which would live in and through us all.

- ✚ Peg is an intrepid peacemaker. She pushes the envelope—she carries the call for peace directly to the centers of entrenched power.
- ✚ Like Gandhi, Peg is a risk-taker, undeterred by fear of being controversial. She lives her faith. I applaud her heroism in refusing to take the legitimate excuses of her age and fragility to exempt her from significant peace work.
- ✚ No matter what the weather, Peg will stand for peace and wave her huge flag to remind those passing by that witnessing for peace is a truly patriotic endeavor. She believes we need to reclaim that symbol of justice stolen by the warmongers.
- ✚ Peg offers a steady, faithful presence of compassion, justice and nonviolence. She leads by example. Her life is her message, just as Gandhi's action and deeds inspired others to step out for peace and nonviolence.
- ✚ Mother Jones, move over for this heaven-raising, peaceful, gentle, Catholic and American senior woman who has infused the tradition of civil disobedience with her own unique presence. Rabbi Abraham Herschel called this "praying with one's feet".

✚ What Peg Gallagher does is take her faith and her patriotism seriously. Unlike the false patriotism of warmongers in government, Peg listens to the words of Jesus as well as the words of the U.S. Constitution. She carries them to their logical conclusion and recognizes that they order her to act against hate, fear and greed in order to build a world based on respect, love and sharing.

✚ Thank you, Peg, for your devotion to protecting our planet and future generations from the disasters human greed and recklessness bring upon us, generation after generation.

Peg also was honored by the Douglas County Democratic Party when she was given their Lifetime Achievement Award on June 12, 2009.

During her remarks at the Gandhi luncheon, Peg invited everyone to join her for a peace demonstration at the next Arms Bazaar in Omaha, scheduled for October 6-8, 2009. Let's join Peg in becoming "holy outlaws" as we try to keep space for peace and support the Preventing an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) United Nations' treaty.

PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN AND JEWISH-AMERICAN SPEAKERS IN NEBRASKA

By Anne Else, Co-Chair, Omaha-NFP Palestinian Rights Task Force

In April, the Palestinian Rights Task Force of Nebraskans for Peace hosted two informative speakers, in cooperation with several local colleges, faith groups and social justice organizations.

The first, Ms. Noura Erekat, is an adjunct professor of international human rights law at Georgetown University. She spoke in Blair, Omaha and Lincoln about her participation in a National Lawyers Guild fact-finding mission to Gaza after the mid-winter attack on Palestinians there.

Members of the mission interviewed civilians who suffered from white phosphorus burns, whose homes had been destroyed, and whose family members, including babies, had been killed. Members also toured demolished Palestinian schools. And they spoke with doctors who had cared for the wounded and who explained that white phosphorus causes horrendous continual burning of flesh. The mission's findings indicate that Israel violated international law through disproportionate use of force against a civilian population.

The second speaker, Anna Baltzer, is a Fulbright scholar and granddaughter of a holocaust survivor.

She began each of her speeches by clarifying three terms which are often misused and misunderstood:

Jew: a person is a Jew by lineage or religion (she by lineage).

Israeli: an Israeli is a citizen of Israel (not all Israelis are Jews).

Zionist: a Zionist believes the state of Israel is for Jews only. Zionism is a political belief, not a religious belief (not all Jews nor Israelis are Zionists; there are even Christian Zionists).

Baltzer lived in Palestine in 2003 and worked with the Women's International Peace Service there in 2007. She now promotes equal rights for Palestinians. Ms. Baltzer also asks U.S. citizens and their elected representatives to stop using U.S. tax dollars to support the oppressive actions of the Israeli government.

Both women called on us to join the American Association for Palestinian Equal Rights (AAPER), an organization formed to counter the pro-Israeli lobby that advocates a Zionist agenda. More information about AAPER can be found at www.AmericansForPalestine.org.

RICE AND BEANS DINNER A SUCCESS

By Holly Dzyban, NFP Member

The Omaha chapter of Nebraskans for Peace held its annual Rice and Beans fundraising dinner on Friday, May 1. More than 50 NFP members and supporters attended.

The theme for the evening was "US Health Care: Today and Tomorrow." Keynote speakers were Richard L. Brown, CEO of the Charles Drew Health Center and Andrea Skolkin, CEO of One World Community Health Centers.

Brown began his speech with a critique of the current US health care system. "It's a system that I call incremental tinkering," he said. Most doctors focus on one problem, one symptom to the exclusion of all others, in part because that approach generates the greatest profit for the caregiver. The mainstream system almost never approaches health care from a holistic, patient-centered perspective.

He explained the community health center model as having a strong emphasis on preventative care, early intervention and education—with much less emphasis on profit. "We provide our services to the poor, but we do not provide poor services."

Brown also made five predictions about the future of U.S. health care:

The number of people without health insurance will grow. People will spend

more out-of-pocket money on health care. The need for behavioral health care will grow. More people will receive care through community health centers like Charles Drew and One World. Hospitals will adopt the community health center methodology.

Skolkin told stories about the clientele at One World. The center annually sees patients from 30 different countries, who speak any of 17 languages. Its mission is to provide "health care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay." In contrast is Nebraska immigration law, she said, which seems to regard U.S. citizenship as a prerequisite for medical care.

Skolkin also discussed the recent economic downturn and how it is affecting health care. One World is seeing a great increase in patients from west Omaha. People are also waiting longer to seek health care,



Rice and beans community eating and talking

since money is so tight. "They are only coming out because they think they have the N1H1 virus."

After the keynote speeches, Jennifer A. Carter, who heads the Healthcare Access Program at Nebraska Appleseed, served as moderator for a Q&A session. Question topics included the Obama administration's approach to health care, the price of end-of-life care, care for the poor and marginal, and single-payer health care.

Carter noted that, although it seems single-payer health care is "off-the-table" right now, Americans may just need to keep trying. "Most European systems were built on what was already in place, so it is still possible here," she said. "It just may take more time and more steps."

After a long and lively discussion, Omaha coordinator Mark Welsch wrapped things up with wonderful news: donations and pledges for the evening amounted to \$10,000! Thanks to all who attended and all who gave.



Speakers Skolkin, Brown, and Carter.

Answer:

President George Washington (1789-1797).



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Question: What former President said, "Government is not reason; it is not eloquence; it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master."? (Answer Inside)

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, July 1, Noon - 1:00 p.m. Senator Tanya Cook will be the speaker at "The Hungry Club" meeting at Big Mamma's Kitchen at 3223 N. 45th St., Building A on the Turning Point Campus. 455-MAMA.

Friday, July 3, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Peaceful Change Movement Concert at Malcolm X Memorial Grounds, 3560 Bedford Ave. featuring the ReMINDers and Devel Crisp, Lyricist at Large. This free, alcohol free, all-ages show will present high-quality hip-hop that is guaranteed to not make you blush.

Wednesday, July 8, 7:00 p.m., NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Avenue. Contact Mark Welsch at 453-0776.

Monday, July 27, 7:00 p.m. NFP's Palestinian Task Force meeting at the Sisters of Mercy Apartments common room, 1705 S. 72nd St. Contact Anne Else at 556-5184.

August 1, 9:00 a.m. – 5 p.m., Take Back the Media Conference at UNO at 60th & Dodge St. in the CPACS Building. Davey D is the keynote speaker. Cost is \$25. Contact Jack Dunn at 551-2552 or www.TakeBackTheMediaOmaha.org

August 5 – 9, Observances of Anniversaries of Atom Bomb Attacks of Japan by Omaha Catholic Worker (OCW), Contact Jerry Ebner at 502-5887. See details below.

Wednesday August 5, 7 pm arrival and potluck dinner at St. John's Church basement on Creighton University's campus at 24th and California St., hosted by the OCW – bring a dish to share.

Thursday, August 6, Hiroshima Day, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Vigil at StratCom 6 p.m. Potluck at OCW followed by 6:45 p.m. Mass with Fr Jack McCaslin.

Friday, August 7, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Vigil at StratCom. In the evening Tim Rinne will speak about StratCom at St. John's Church basement.

Saturday, August 8, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Vigil at StratCom, Evening TBA.

Sunday, August 9, Nagasaki Day, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Vigil at StratCom followed by Prayer Service and possible Line Crossing.

Wednesday, August 12, 7:00 p.m., NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Ave. Contact Mark Welsch at 453-0776.

August's NFP's Palestinian Task Force meeting. Contact Anne Else at 556-5184 for date, time and location.

Every Wednesday, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Peace Vigil at StratCom/ UNO, 6801 Pine St. (east of UNO Scott Technology Center). Contact Jerry Ebner at 502-5887.

Every Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. Progressive movies and dinner at McFoster's Natural Kind Cafe at 38th and Farnam Streets. See <http://www.progressiveomaha.com/films.htm> for more info.

Every Saturday, 1:00-2:00 p.m. Anti-War and Peace Vigil at 72nd and Dodge Streets Contact Steve Horn at 426-9068.

Every First Wednesday of the month, Noon - 1:00 p.m. "The Hungry Club" meeting at Big Mamma's Kitchen at 3223 N. 45th St., Building A on the Turning Point Campus. Interesting speaker every month. July's speaker is Senator Tanya Cook. Contact 455-MAMA.

So we can keep you up-to-date about other events and activities, please send your email address to NFPomaha@NebraskansForPeace.org